

Noticias

A publication of the DCFS
Latino Advisory Committee

Pat Quinn, Governor
Erwin McEwen, Director

Winter Edition, 2011

Memories from the 2010 Latino Family Institute



Noticias

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Welcome from the Chairperson

Luis F. Carrión, LCSW

Welcome! It is a great pleasure for the Latino Advisory Committee (LAC) to have had so many of you join us in our 22nd Annual Latino Family Institute in November. The theme for this Family Institute, Under Counted, Under Served: Identifying, Counting and Servicing Latino Families & Children, focused on the need to accurately identify the Latino population in the United States, and especially in the state of Illinois, to better understand the implications and consequences of that growth to the child welfare system. We request your assistance in properly identifying our clients in hopes of channeling sufficient funds towards development and support of resources that will strengthen and support our Latino families and children.

We hope the Institute workshops provided some new strategies to engage and serve Latino clients. Workshop topics included the most recent information about Differential Response, the Family Advocacy Centers, the Community Mapping System and the mission of the Illinois Latino Family Commission among others. Summaries of some of the workshops and how to obtain further information have been included in this edition of Noticias. We hope this information will be useful to your work and inspire you to attend future Institutes.

The Latino Advisory Committee would like to extend their gratitude to Director Erwin McEwen and his deputies for their efforts in improving the provision of services to our children and families.

Respectfully,
Luis F. Carrión, Chairperson
Latino Advisory Committee

Welcome New Hires!

Monica Sosa, DCP, Cook Central and Carlos Acosta, Woodstock

If we missed anyone, let us know and they will be included in the next issue of Noticias.

Saludos y Bienvenidos!

Frank Navarro, Someone You Should Know

By Sylvia Fonseca

I had the pleasure of recently sitting down and speaking with Frank Navarro, Associate Deputy Director of Operations, where he shared some personal information and provided interesting insights.

Frank has an M.S.W. from Aurora University where he also completed his undergraduate studies.

On July 1st 2010, he completed 20 years of working at DCFS. Frank has held several positions while employed with the department. He has worked as a DCP investigator, foster care representative, DCP supervisor, foster care trainer/licensing supervisor, LANS supervisor and now is in his current position of Associate Deputy Director of Operations.

Prior to coming to DCFS, Frank worked for the Illinois Migrant Council and District U46/Elgin as a community liaison between the schools and parents/community. He has had many other jobs and has participated in various community organizations. Due to his new job responsibilities, he has been unable to participate as frequently as he had in the past with his local community organizations.

Frank is from Mexico City. His wife Consuelo was born in Cuba. They have a lot in common, especially coming from large families. He comes from a sibling group of 12 and she has 16 siblings. They have two daughters, Darcie and Allison. In fact, the most recent challenge he faced is the "empty nest syndrome" as both his daughters have recently moved out. He, his wife and adult children are actively involved in their church and community.

Frank's reason for working in child welfare comes from his love of working with people. However, this was a passion that was ingrained in him many years earlier when he first arrived in the U.S. as a monolingual Spanish-speaking child. As Frank explained, he was able to catch on to the English language much faster than his parents and older siblings. He was often utilized as an interpreter for them, and his parents extended his services to their friends and neighbors. You could say Frank was a community advocate as a young boy. He enjoyed being helpful to his immediate family as well as the community. It is clear that his sense of responsibility to his family and the community as a whole was instilled in him early on by his parents.

Frank's advice to staff is, "Believe in what you do. It is especially important when you work with clients in the service delivery we are charged with. Children and family come first. Be committed to the job. Learn to work as a team. Remember you are not alone at the work site."

When asked about a key moment in his career, he thoughtfully recounted the following as if the situation had happened a week ago. As an investigator he was assigned the case of a family of 12 children with an allegation of neglect. The circumstance was they were living in a car. On the day Frank went out it was 105 degrees outside. The father had lost his job, and all the family had left was the car and each other. The youngest children were twin six-month-old infants and the oldest was around 12. During this time, taking custody of these children would have been what was regularly



Frank Navarro

practiced. Frank, however, did not see this as helping to strengthen the family. Instead he went to his co-workers and contacts within the community to find help and get this family back on their feet. Together as a community/team effort they found the father a job. They helped secure the family a rental unit where they negotiated with the landlord to wait three months to start collecting the rent. This saved the family from being separated. Several years later he touched base with this family and they were doing well.

To Frank's credit, he stated this was only accomplished because it was a team effort. He further stated, "It's easier to work harder than taking a short cut, because in the long run you get satisfaction seeing a family staying together and moving forward."

In closing, Frank shared this quote: "To fail is not to try." He explained, "I see myself as a failure if I don't at least try. Even if I don't succeed, I am successful because I tried."

Frank Navarro is someone you should know.

DCFS Bilingual Employee of the Year: *Gloria Navarro, Child Welfare Advanced Specialist, Northern Region*



Gloria Navarro

The following information was excerpted from the nomination form that garnered Gloria Navarro recognition as 2010 DCFS Bilingual Employee of the Year.

Gloria has been responsible for bilingual cases from the Rockford area. She has a strong commitment to servicing our families. Her priority is to make the transition for the family as easy as possible. Gloria provides her families with timely referrals to Spanish-speaking providers and

locates providers in the community even if DCFS does not have a relationship with them. She develops and assists the providers to support our families. She exhibits professionalism but is personable and can laugh and enjoy the company of her clients while at the same time working with them to achieve their goals.

Gloria has high ethical and personal standards. She shows interest in every child on her caseload whether that child is on run, returning home or moving towards adoption. She advocates for those who need it more and congratulates those who need it less and advocate on their own.

Gloria has positive relationships with her coworkers. She is not afraid to take the leadership role. She takes time to help new workers organize themselves; she answers their questions and gives advice and ideas. Gloria extends herself to ensure work tasks are completed. Gloria takes initiative, assists in quality improvement projects and presents great ideas for improvement within the office. She is a wonderful and caring person and demonstrates this to her families and coworkers on a daily basis. Gloria's clients often comment on how she has helped them. We should be very proud of the work she does on behalf of DCFS.

POS Bilingual Employee of the Year: *Cynthia Arias, Intact Specialist, Arden Shore*

The following information was excerpted from the nomination form that garnered Cynthia Arias recognition as 2010 POS Bilingual Employee of the Year.

Cynthia began at Arden Shore in March 2007 as a Burgos caseworker. Since the day she started, Cynthia has proven to be a very organized, detail-oriented, conscientious, professional and dependable worker. While in the Burgos program, in addition to her specific duties, Cynthia spent a great deal of time compiling statistical information and reports in order for the Burgos program to be more organized. Cynthia was soon promoted to Intact Specialist. Cynthia has also taken the initiative to coordinate Arden Shore's domestic violence and truancy groups when needed.

In her current position, Cynthia ensures that she visits all of her clients as required. However, due to many difficult situations her families experienced this past year, Cynthia spent countless evenings and nights visiting her families more often than required in order to assist them in any way she could. For example, one of her families lived in a shelter for seven months. When the client left the shelter, Cynthia was able to find furniture and many household items for the family. She went the extra mile by making herself available and offering to pick up donations at various places and delivering them to the family herself.

In all of these manners, Cynthia has shown an outstanding level of dedication, knowledge and professionalism. She is extremely skilled at engaging difficult families. She is a very ethical individual and instills a feeling of trust and security in her clients. When Cynthia is given extra assignments, she never complains and does the work with enthusiasm and optimism. Cynthia is always there for her clients and often offers help to her colleagues when she sees them struggling.



Cynthia Arias

Cynthia is eager to learn new information and hopes to attend graduate school in the future. For now she attends all possible trainings with DCFS, Arden Shore and other non-required trainings. At times Cynthia has had to pay out of her pocket to attend trainings that interest her. For instance, Cynthia was assigned a family who has a child born with Cerebral Palsy and as a result presented as deaf and mute. Shortly after being assigned that case, Cynthia enrolled in sign language classes in order to learn how to communicate with that particular client.

Cynthia is a valued staff member and Arden Shore is proud and fortunate to have her as an employee and colleague.

POS Bilingual Foster Parents of the Year: *Zaida Gonzalez and Nicolas Morales*



Zaida Gonzalez

The following information was excerpted from the nomination form that garnered this family recognition as 2010 Bilingual Foster Parents of the Year.

Zaida Gonzalez and Nicolas Morales are a married Puerto Rican couple from the Humboldt Park area. As foster parents, they have been dedicated to the welfare of all their foster children. Mrs. Gonzalez is a retired nurse and accountant.

This family fostered one child beginning when she was about four months old and supported her return home to her mother when she was

four years old. Now, four years later, they still maintain a relationship with the child and her mother. The child comes over for weekend visits and vacations with the foster parents.

At one point after the return home, the natural mother went to Mexico with the former foster child and her two younger siblings but was detained at the border. The mother was unable to return to the U.S. at that time. Mrs. Gonzalez flew to Mexico to pick up the children and returned them to the U.S. where she cared for the three children for about three months until the natural mother was able to return to the U.S. again.

These foster parents have provided permanency to two other children—a 13-year-old girl and an 11-year-old

boy. The family has helped the kids to excel academically and the 13-year-old is now an honor student. Both children are doing very well.

Zaida Gonzalez and Nicolas Morales are currently fostering a 4-year-old boy who has been in their care since he was an infant. The child is doing very well in their home and is in the process of being adopted by them.

In addition to the cases mentioned above, the family has cared for other children on an emergency basis so that they did not have to go to the shelter. These foster parents have worked well with natural parents, supported various permanency goals and ensured the children in their home are loved.

Workshop: Shedding Light on Mental Illness through Theatre

By Elizabeth Arroyo

Erasing the Distance, an organization that sheds light on mental health issues through theatre, performed two real-life stories using professional actors during the *Shedding Light on Mental Illness through Theatre* workshop at the 2010 Latino Family Institute. The first performance presented the story of a 10-year-old girl and the influences of her alcoholic father. The story, told from the young girl's perspective, provides insight into the family dynamics as seen through the eyes of a child. When the family decides to buy the father a guitar because he always dreamed of being a rock star, the young girl thinks it will reduce his urge to drink. She soon realizes that she hates listening to the guitar because her father often plays it while drunk.

One day, after an argument with the mother, the father leaves the home vowing never to return. The girl

retreats to her room in tears wanting him to stay. When her sobs finally subside, she goes out to find him in the kitchen and throws her arms around his waist in a fierce embrace. It is then she realizes that he is hollow. She could feel his bones under the fabric of his shirt. After the story was told, the audience was given an opportunity to talk about the young girl's experiences.

The second performance told the story of a young man who despite being an honor roll student began cutting himself to lessen the pain, he says, from feeling different. He begins to abuse drugs until he finds himself in the hospital after having had a seizure as a result of the drug use. He then begins to use over-the-counter medications and inhalers to give him a high. The story, again told in the first person point-of-view, opens up

the discussion on how the "good" students are often overlooked as having severe mental health problems.

Shedding light on mental illness through these first person accounts not only generates awareness, but allows participants to engage in open dialogue about sensitive issues that begin the healing process.

One workshop attendee commented: *I found it fascinating how theatre can be incorporated into the field of social work in such a way that can offer a voice to many family experiences. The performances offered opportunities to share emotions about similar work experiences and different ways situations were handled. I was really moved by the performances and thought of so many other ways this can shed light on different stigmas and traumas to different populations and settings.*

2010 Latino Family Institute

By Cecilio Perez

This year's Latino Family Institute did not disappoint. The food was spectacular, the entertainment and fellowship was warm and engaging and the speakers and workshops were relevant and inspiring. This is one conference where you can count on seeing many of the same faces year after year. I believe this is the case because we know what it is like to attend a conference and feel your time could have been better spent at work. This is not the case with the Latino Family Institute.

We are able to maintain a high quality conference year after year through the generous support of the Department and our community partners like the Latino Consortium and other agencies. Attendees see the finished work of many hours of preparation by



Ricky Echevarria and Mike Lewis



DCFS Foster Parents of the Year Marta and Marco Colon and DCFS caseworker Sulma Garcia-Mora

volunteers in agencies throughout the state. Attendees do not see how much work it takes, but they can see the smiling faces during the conference breaks and meals and the pleased looks when we come back to the office. This conference was started years ago, and with your continued interest, support and potential contribution in time or as a presenter, we can continue to bring forward topics and training that can better equip you in your vital work. Perhaps your contribution is granting permission as a supervisor to a subordinate to participate in the conference. Perhaps you can contribute as a presenter. We all know those gifted persons in or near our community with insight and data which would benefit attendees. Speak to them about the conference, and if you think they could contribute to our conference, let a member of the Latino Advisory Committee know; but don't be surprised when you are invited to be a part of the conference planning committee.

I enjoy a good book, good sermons and learning. Combine this with good people, great food and an opportunity to enhance your skill set, and then you have a recipe for success. The contributions of participants are vital in our continued hope to bring a more diverse body of knowledge to our workers. Be a part of this work and volunteer, participate, plan to attend, plan to be challenged.

We all have heard of circumstances in our communities where a child needs shoes, or a family has fled to a shelter, or about the loss of a parent that has sent a family into chaos. Many of us are moved enough to ask about the family and want to know more. Some of us take a further step by planning to make a donation. Maybe we make a mental note to

put together our own excess at home and plan a donation at a drop off. Then there are those of us who follow through and buy the pair of shoes or find many pairs of shoes and go to where the need is. These are scenarios everyone in the social service field face daily. Most of us regularly hear of these families. Some of us come from these families. We are all bound together by many commonalities and the biggest of these is our humanity. It is not race. It is not culture. It is not economical.

Our speakers at the conference this year were great. I was drawn in particularly by the children in Roberto Dansie's cultural awareness workshop because I could relate. I recall those who took an interest in me and invested their time and love in my successes. They were often not the teachers who went to college or the priests who went to seminary, but the volunteer grandmothers who hugged every kid in catechism. It was the neighbor who would sit us down and tell us stories about growing up poor and happy. I can recognize compassion and so do you and your clients. We are the vehicles of this compassion. We are blessed in that we find ourselves in the compassion line of work. We do not have to look for opportunities to help families in need. We can recruit grandmothers. We can recognize a gifted teen and guide and direct them to opportunities to volunteer so others can see their brilliance. We can start finding out needs surrounding us and our clients. We can engage our clients with a spirit of volunteerism and sense of community. How many of us know our neighbors by their first names? And how many of them have grandchildren? How many of those neighbors have talents that could be exercised within our community centers or mentoring groups? We are

The Focus is on You: Roi Montalvo

DCFS Regional Administrator, Cook North Child Protection



DCFS Director Erwin McEwen



Roberto Dansie

untapped talent scouts and service directories.

I am inspired by the first-hand accounts of the lives lived particularly by those touched by poverty. I recently read a book by Jeanette Wells called *The Glass Castle* about growing up poor in the southwest and West Virginia. Stories like hers, of perseverance and purpose despite challenges, resound in me. The stories of success are common in our country and in our own communities. Let us find them and share them with our families and youth. Let us help create them. Let us raise an army of compassion ambassadors willing to listen and meet the needs of others. We know we can do this work because others have done it for us. Be the mentor you had and point the way for future mentors in training. Find out your coworkers' needs, your neighbors' birthday and hobbies and identify potential community volunteers.

In every issue of Noticias we focus on a different Spanish-speaking bilingual employee. In this issue we introduce DCFS Regional Administrator Roi Montalvo. If you know someone we should highlight, E-mail Evelyn Martinez at Evelyn.Martinez@illinois.gov.

Where are you and your family from? My family is from California. I come from a large family, and yes I am Hispanic. My family is blended with several sisters-in-law who are Asian, Afro-American and Caucasian. Thus, the tribe only gets bigger.

School degrees: I have an undergraduate degree in Public Administration and a Master's degree in Social Work.

How long have you been in child welfare? I have been with DCFS since 1991. I started out as a trainee in Program OP's and at that time was the only bi-lingual staff person working in the South Area Office. I then moved over to Intact as a supervisor then after two years I moved to investigations: first as a supervisor then as the investigative manager. My current position is Regional Administrator for Cook North Child Protection.

Why did you become a child welfare worker? I honestly enjoy being on the front lines with the Investigative Unit. I think most of us in life want to make a difference in some form or another, and helping our most defenseless seemed a natural fit for me. I believe that children provide clarity in life. They depend on adults to do the right thing by them, and I believe the most fundamental thing in life and as a society, is to provide for and protect children. Helping children is the right thing to do. It is not a question of "having" to do it. Having to do it is not part of the equation.

I believe investigators value and are willing to adapt and implement specific change that is planned, because they

know it is urgently needed, they know it is important, and they know it is beneficial and worthwhile to protect a child. This is why I became a child welfare worker. I work with a group of committed individuals who share a common core value – protecting children. I am so proud of my staff.



Roi Montalvo

Challenges you face: A continuing challenge is recruiting eligible staff to conduct child protection investigations, as well as maintaining staffing levels of both supervisors and investigators. Most notable is the need for Spanish-speaking investigators throughout the state. Another challenge I face is implementing strategies that will effectively address intake of investigations vs. the availability of staff due to lack of funding. The demands on field staff who are dealing with highly complex investigations, the lack of resources and numerous factors that place pressure on the many priorities placed on them is very challenging. I am very lucky to have self-motivated staff.

Helpful advice: Don't complain, and take responsibility. If you do, when you voice your concerns they have more legitimacy. Be a team player by facing up to conflict and acknowledging there is a problem—then you have an opportunity to solve it together.

Key moments in your career: Taking advantage of any opportunity, no matter how small, that is presented. Moving out to the Midwest was a key moment in my personnel life and in my career.

Quotes: If you don't have time to do it now, when will you have time to do it over?



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Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS in the Latino Community

Did You Know?

- Among U.S. high school students, nearly half have had sexual intercourse.
- Among Chicago students, 56.9% have had intercourse.
- The average age of first intercourse for boys and girls is 15.
- Illinois has the 10th highest annual rate of Hispanic teen pregnancies; each year 114.6 births per 1,000 Illinois teens occur among Hispanics ages 15 to 19.
- Today, about 1 in 4 Americans living with HIV are women.
- In Illinois, 20% of the HIV cases are among young women of color ages 13-24.
- Latina women represent roughly 11 percent of the HIV/AIDS cases in women, while 13 percent of the Illinois population is Latino.
- Hispanics represent about 13 percent of Illinois' population and account for 13 percent of new reported cases of HIV/AIDS.
- AIDS diagnosis is 2 times higher among Latinos than the rate among Caucasians.

HIV Prevention and Risk Reduction Message to Adults for Youth

1. Talk to youth early about personal values, sexual health and healthy relationships.
2. Abstinence or waiting for sexual intercourse will prevent HIV.
3. Youth may be referred to their HealthWorks doctor to discuss sexual health.
4. Youth 12 and over have the right to confidential sexual health information.
5. Condoms protect partners from HIV, sexually transmitted diseases, and pregnancy.
6. Sexually active youth may obtain free condoms from local public health clinic.
7. Youth may request a prescription for condoms from their doctor paid for by their medical card.
8. Birth control and contraceptives do not protect partners from STDs or HIV.
9. Condoms encourage male responsibility.
10. The Center for Disease Control recommends that youth get HIV testing once a year.
11. Teach youth that they can still say NO after being sexually active.
12. Keep talking about healthy relationships, positive activities, and life goals.

Sexually active youth should be tested for HIV at least once a year. They may obtain testing and protection from their HealthWorks provider or a local public health clinic. For more information, contact the DCFS AIDS Project Staff: Denyce Ellis at 312-328-2158 or Shirley Millsap at 312-328-2154.

Cultural Awareness Workshop

By Sylvia Fonseca



Roberto Dansie

I attended the Cultural Awareness workshop presented by clinical psychologist Roberto Dansie during the 2010 Latino Family Institute. Dansie was a very dynamic presenter who provided information regarding the role of culture along with the importance of self-awareness. He shared many examples of his own experiences in which he realized the importance of not making generalizations based on our own book knowledge.

Dansie shared how he ran a two-day race in the mountains with the local indigenous population. Dansie, being

an avid runner, thought he could compete with these gentleman, most of whom were twice his age. He was surprised to see they ran with sandals while he wore "Nike gym shoes." By the end of the race his feet were bloody and blistered, and he was exhausted. The other men, even the eldest who was past the age of 65, were fine.

Dansie realized that had he taken the time beforehand to understand the importance of the information that he had ignored he would have had a more fulfilling and less painful experience. It was not about the competition of beating the others, but as the elder had stated, "It is about ensuring they all made it to their destination."

This concept is important to integrate as we work with a variety of cultures in the field of child welfare. We may reinforce cultural beliefs in a way that help us engage clients, while providing an atmosphere of professionalism and respect. We need to listen to the reasons behind why a family does things a certain way so we can help support their cultural strengths and beliefs. We also need to ensure our own cultural beliefs and limitations are not interfering or blocking the process if we as professionals want to journey along side the families and children we serve to ensure they make it to their final destination of "reunification."

Life Skills Workshop

By Madeline Gonzalez-Garcia

Panelists: Holly Bitner-Duck, DCFS Life Skills Manager, Northern Region; Osiris Flores, Supervisor, Seguin Services; Dahlia Roman, DCFS permanency worker Northern Region; and Warnita A. Taylor, Founder of DIME Child Foundation/Life Skills provider

The life skills workshop offered at the 2010 Hispanic Family Institute provided participants with an opportunity to listen to the panelists' experiences and expertise. The focus of the workshop was to help workers identify ways to use their in-person contact time with youth to reinforce life skills while respecting cultural identity, strengths and challenges.

The panelists shared experiences with capitalizing on and creating windows of opportunity such as going to the grocery store with the youth, assisting in shopping and helping the youth prepare a meal. In addition, the panelists insist that workers be creative in their work with

the youth and maintain consistent communication with the Life Skills provider and caregiver.

The panel also shared ways to work on life skills with gang-involved youth by suggesting that workers not challenge the gang activity but instead engage youth by looking at their strengths and interests. Interested youth can receive training in radio and magazine journalism, photography and music production in addition to the required curriculum. Lastly, the panelists encouraged participants to reinforce life skills lessons by staying in contact with providers about youth's needs and keeping communication between all parties open.

Life skills are required for our youth. We can encourage them to attend training, but how do we assess what they have learned and if additional class time is warranted? This can be achieved through our relationships with the youths and reinforcing the

concepts learned in life skills. More importantly, respect youths' cultural identities while still encouraging life skills lessons.

Joint Meeting: LAC & AAAC

The Latino Advisory Committee (LAC) and African American Advisory Council (AAAC) had their bi-annual joint meeting on May 20, 2010 at the 1911 S. Indiana DCFS office. Topics discussed included: a joint project to collect books for the youth at the Joliet detention facility, obstacles in the planning of each group's annual conference and discussion on the Open Meetings Act. The next joint meeting was held on December 15, 2010, and will be recapped in the next edition of Noticias.

DCFS Family Advocacy Centers Workshop

By Arlene T. Rodriguez

In case you were wondering, as I was, whether the Family Advocacy Centers offered services in Spanish for our families, the answer is SI!

The 2010 Latino Family Institute workshop entitled “Making a Difference with Family Advocacy Centers” revealed the centers are staffed by bi-lingual/bi-cultural workers and can be found all over the state of Illinois and in each DCFS Region. So if your families reside in Champaign, Moline, East St. Louis, Peoria, Round Lake or the city of Chicago, a Family Advocacy Center is available to provide culturally sensitive linguistic services.

The seven workshop panelists were enthusiastic, committed and truly up to the challenge of providing needed services in innovative ways. A specific question to the panel regarding undocumented families and provision of services provided area churches as a resource where a family’s legal status would not be asked. During DCP investigations, center staff have been contacted by

a family to translate and provide assistance in navigating the system.

Some of the services provided in various Family Advocacy Centers include the Parent Café, counseling, support groups, ESL classes, work readiness, domestic violence support, parenting coaching, 24-hour crisis response, referrals, case management, outreach services, in-home family services, anger management, after-school programs, childcare, transportation, immigration services, court-ordered supervised child visitation for non-custodial parents, and intensive mediation services.

An intake person will take your call and assist you through the process when referring a family. The centers are a resource to encourage, advocate and teach our families how to confront the many barriers that can tear families apart.

For further information please contact Sam Gillespie, AOD Service Administrator, at 312-814-5483.

Listing of Family Advocacy Centers

Cook North:

Bright Star Community Outreach
735 E. 44th Street
Chicago, IL 60653
Phone: 773-616-7287

Cook Central:

Christian Fellowship Flock –
Fellowship Connection
2435 W. Division
Chicago, IL 60622
Phone: 773-772-1141

Erie Neighborhood House
4225 West 25th Street
Chicago, IL 60623
Phone: 773-542-7617

Westside Family Advocacy Center/
Healthy Families Chicago
2100 S. Marshall Blvd. Unit 201
Chicago, IL 60623
Phone: 773-257-0111 x 111

Mujeres Latinas en Acción
(Latina Women in Action)
2124 W. 21st Place
Chicago, IL 60608
Phone: 773-890-7676

Cook South:

Latino Resource Institute
8910 S. Commercial
Chicago, IL 60617
Phone: 773-356-5923

Boys Town Chicago
Family-Centered Services Program
4538 South Hermitage
Chicago, IL 60609
Phone: 773-247-7725 ext. 101

A Knock At Midnight
400 W. 76th Street
Chicago, IL 60620
Phone: 773-488-2960

Northern Region/Lake County:

Nicasa
31979 N. Fish Lake Road
Round Lake, IL 60073
Phone: 847-546-6450

Central Region:

Champaign County
Family Advocacy in Champaign County
310 W. Church
Champaign, IL 61820
Phone: 217-607-0546

McLean County
Family Community Resource Center
509 West Washington Street
Bloomington, IL 61701
Phone: 309-821-1616

Peoria County
Lifeline Family Services
3616 North Sheridan Road
Peoria, IL 61604
Phone: 309-685-2445

Rock Island, Mercer, Henry Counties
Casa Guanajuato Latino Community
Services Network
133 4th Avenue
Moline, IL 61265,
Phone: 309-736-7727

Sangamon County
Primed For Life/Professional Advocacy
816 South College Street
Springfield, IL 62704
Phone: 217-789-2980

Southern Region:

East St. Louis, St. Clair and close
surrounding counties
Family Advocacy House
527 Washington Place
East St. Louis, IL 62205
Phone: 618-271-4500

Support for our Youth In College

By: Dahlia Roman

Often times we have done the work to help our youth in care in develop a support network. That support network often consists of a Child & Family Team, treatment team, therapist, foster parents and biological parents as well as some form of community-based support. Our youth are essentially wrapped with the services and support they need to be successfully transitioned to the next phase in their lives. This security is what often times provides our youth with what they need to stay afloat. We also recognize that they may not realize this as so much as a support but rather more as something required.

As a whole we take much pride when all this support leads our youth to making the strides necessary to go off to college. We plan, we access many great Department resources and overall our youth are happy to make this transition. What we do not realize is the feeling of isolation they may feel once that transition is made. When our youth go off to college much of their support is left behind or back “home.”

I am currently a placement worker out of the DeKalb Field office and have had the pleasure of working with the Youth In College (YIC) attending Northern Illinois University (NIU). I found that the more time I spent with my youth, the more I realized they had no idea there were others like them—wards attending college—who were also at the same school, experiencing many of the same feelings and struggling to develop that new support network. Being in college comes with a great deal of freedom many have not yet experienced. One youth mentioned the need for support. I had already



felt the need to connect them but wasn't sure how.

With feedback from each of my YIC cases, we decided to create Meet n Greet sessions at our local office. Being the mom I am, I made a home-cooked meal and found a great out-pouring of contributions from the rest of our office. Some staff provided side dishes or desserts and another made Easter baskets for the youth. Another co-worker and former ward also attended as our guest speaker and spoke about his experiences, which helped the youth feel more connected. To date, we have had two successful Meet n Greet events. The first was held in April and the other in May 2010.

I was more than proud to be a part of this process to watch my youth network with each other and create their own new support network. As the new school year begins, it is my hope to continue this with my youth while also extending an invitation to any other YIC attending NIU.

Response to Intervention (RtI)

By Yasmina Sefiane

The Response to Intervention (RtI) workshop held at the 2010 Latino Family Institute was presented by DCFS Education Advisors Diane Fitzhugh and Yasmina Sefiane. The workshop provided information on RtI, which is a problem-solving model that uses data-driven decision making to help students who are struggling academically or behaviorally. RtI has been mandated in all Illinois schools beginning this academic school year. It was important to get this information out to staff so they can have another avenue to advocate for our children.

The Education Advisors shared that all children have a unique learning style and usually schools “teach to the middle,” which means the average student can learn. What happens to the children that struggle? The promise of RtI is that schools will respond to the needs as soon as they are apparent instead of waiting for the child to fail. Information was provided on how to help students who fall through the cracks and how RtI can provide help and support for the student. Information was given on the essential components and potential benefits of RtI and how this looks in the school setting.

The Education Advisors also discussed what role RtI plays in special education eligibility and what the time line is for continuing to use interventions before determining that a special education evaluation is needed.

The Education Advisors intend to provide additional training in the regions so more placement staff will have access to this information.

Noticias is brought to you by the Latino Advisory Committee and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. It is distributed to DCFS employees, POS agencies, and agencies affiliated with DCFS. The newsletter includes articles pertinent to child welfare, Latino welfare issues, and DCFS/ POS programs, and strives to be an informative source for staff by providing updates on new child welfare initiatives as well as upcoming events. It is our hope to continue providing staff with a vehicle for the sharing of information. In this endeavor, we are looking for your input, submission of articles, and suggestions for improving Noticias. Articles related to your experiences with families and personal stories

are also greatly appreciated.

Please submit articles, information about upcoming events, or news to:

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